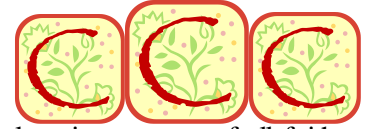


Winter 2016-2017

A nondenominational Christian congregation



welcoming persons of all faiths
and of uncertain faith,

meeting in historic St. Peter's Church

346 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011

Sundays (except August) 12:00 p.m.

www.chelseachurch.org

info@chelseachurch.org

(212) 886-5463

CHELSEA COMMUNITY CHURCH NEWSLETTER

December 2016, January-February 2017

42nd Annual Candlelight Carol Service is December 18th, 6:00 p.m.

Broadway Actor/Singer **Arbender Robinson** to read "A Visit from St. Nicholas." Program features music from many countries and centuries including the 2005 gospel arrangement of "Walk in the Light" by André Thomas – back by popular demand.

This service, comprising Scripture lessons and related choir and congregational carol singing, will take place in our worship home, the historic St. Peter's Chelsea. As usual, the event is free; an offering will be accepted.



The choir, under the direction of **Larry J. Long**, will present choral music from the ancient plainsong chant "Hodie Christus natus est" (*Today, Christ is born*) to John Rutter's contemporary "Shepherd's Pipe Carol" with harp and piccolo (UK). Other music includes Stephen Paulus' "Halelu" (US), the early 17th century British composer

Thomas Weelkes' "Magnificat," the beautiful and familiar "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming" by Michael Praetorius (Germany), the opening movement of Antonio Vivaldi's "Gloria in excelsis" (Italy) plus Jacques Berthier's Taizé chant "Gloria in excelsis" (France). The choir will be accompanied by internationally recognized organist **Christopher Houlihan**, along with harp and flute/piccolo.

Veteran Broadway singer/actor **Arbender Robinson** will read Clement Clarke Moore's famous poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (because St. Peter's Church stands on land that was part of Moore's estate; that history will be briefly presented as well). Mr. Robinson has appeared on Broadway in *Hairspray*, Disney's *The Little Mermaid* and *Lion King*, *Hair*, *Ragtime*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *Beautiful*. He was most recently featured in the hit musical *Shuffle Along*. He is also a teaching artist working with many organizations across the country, and is a huge advocate for autism awareness and research. Photos: top, Arbender Robinson, above right, from his website; center-right, 2015 choir, © Malcolm Ritter; center-left, Larry J. Long leads a choir practice, photo by Andra Moss.

Pastoral Reflections – Winter 2016

By the time you read this, we'll have a new president-elect but you might still feel worried and anxious. According to the American Psychological Association's Harris Poll, *Stress in America*, 52% of American adults are coping with high levels of stress brought on by the election -- whether you're a Democrat or a Republican!

Most of the APA's advice for handling that stress is water under the bridge after election day, but I have my own ways of coping with stress that come directly from my faith experience and I thought I'd share a few.

I start by remembering that we are neither the first nor last human beings to disagree. Biblical folks also struggled with questions of fit leadership and the leaders who are remembered most favorably are the ones, like David, who excelled in one area that overcame their flaws in others.

I also remember that I interpret my own experience to determine what I believe will happen in the future - but my experience is limited and my interpretation biased. If I close myself off to opportunities of goodness in the future because of my own dire expectations, like Paul, then I suffer until I open my eyes.

And, finally, I remember all the good that has already come into my life from difficult times. I remember that, like hundreds of folks in scripture, deeper love followed foolish arguments, children followed labor pains, and committed faith followed spiritual challenges.

Whatever the anxiety you might be feeling these days, find a centered place of goodness within your life to stand firm, know that you are not alone, and open your eyes for future possibilities. And if you need someone to do that with, you can join me and the rest of Chelsea Community Church any Sunday at noon! ***Blessings, Beth***

CCC's Reading Group

...is discussing Bishop John Shelby Spong's book *Biblical Literacy – A Gentile Heresy*.

In the Preface, Spong shares a dilemma: he loves the Bible but is often embarrassed by the way Christians use it. He also writes that he refuses to adopt an either/or mentality about scripture; he will not give up his intellectual honesty but he also will not give up the Bible!

If that dilemma sounds familiar to you – or if you just enjoy challenging spiritual conversation! - join the reading group in the Rectory most Sundays at 10:30am. You can contact RevBethPerry@gmail.com for the schedule.

Brief Treasurer's Report

As in years past, we are currently accepting (and looking for) contributions to offset the cost of our annual Candlelight Carol Service. As you may know, this service, which we consider our "gift to the community," generally just breaks even in paying for the costs of choir director, organist, publicity, decorations and refreshments. Your tax-deductible donations are needed and appreciated and will be acknowledged in the service bulletin (unless you say not to). Deadline for be listed is Sunday, December 11. – *Paul Bodden*



Looking back: Our 2016 Blessing of Animals Service

On October 16 we held our annual Blessing of Animals gathering of companion animals and their companions. **Otto Walberg** was lay leader and tenor soloist, with **Jeff Cubeta** accompanying on the piano/organ, **Christian Thompsen** on guitar and **Frank Hosteka** on trumpet. The song *Everyday is a Blessing* was commissioned for the service, with music by Christian Thompsen and lyrics by **John Hohman**. **Victoria Wells**, CPDT, Senior Manager of Shelter Behavior and Training at the ASPCA, offered a Meditation on her work of assessment and behavioral rehabilitation of severely abused and neglected dogs. **Jeanne Nugent** presented the Reading.



During the service a general blessing of animals was conducted by **Rev. Beth Perry**, CCC's pastoral counselor; afterwards, and

Rev. Stephen Harding, interim pastor, and **Rev. Storm Swain**, also of St. Peter's Church, Chelsea, did blessings of individual animals. *Photos of Victoria Wells, right, Otto Walberg, left and Rev. Storm Swain, below right, blessing dog with woman* ©2016 by Robert Mitchell, Jr.



Fulton Book Group – Time Goes By



In 2011 Chelsea children's book publisher Kathleen Doherty ("Kat") and I created a weekly reading circle for kids in Fulton Houses. Thanks to manager Miguel Aceveda, we always had a place to read. It wasn't a large group, but we enjoyed getting to know our regulars. As the kids got older, some became more interested in other activities. Kat and I decided that it was time to say "good-bye" to the Book Club — but not to the kids! Over the years we have taken them on outings to museums, libraries, and most recently an eye-opening exhibit sponsored by Doctors Without Borders. We celebrated our last book reading in October with a pizza party and a discussion of improbable outings. Stay

tuned! —Lynn Ramsey

Photo from Fulton Book Group recent visit to Doctors Without Borders exhibit. L to r., Lynn, Heaven, Tony, Doctors Without Borders volunteer, Elizabeth, and Lorraine.

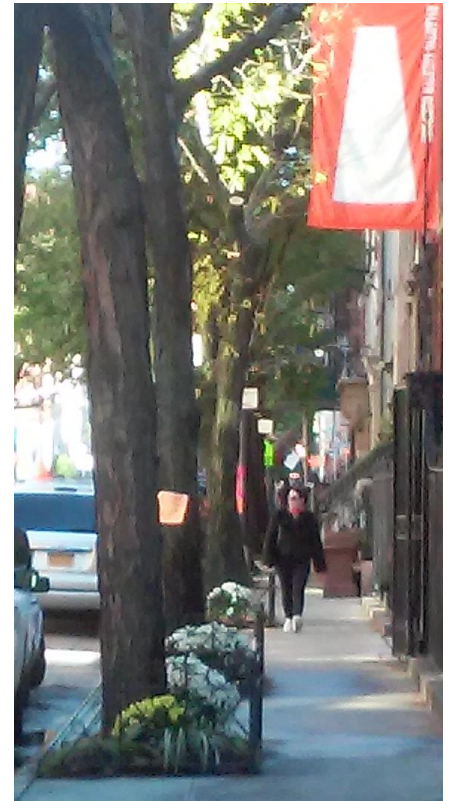
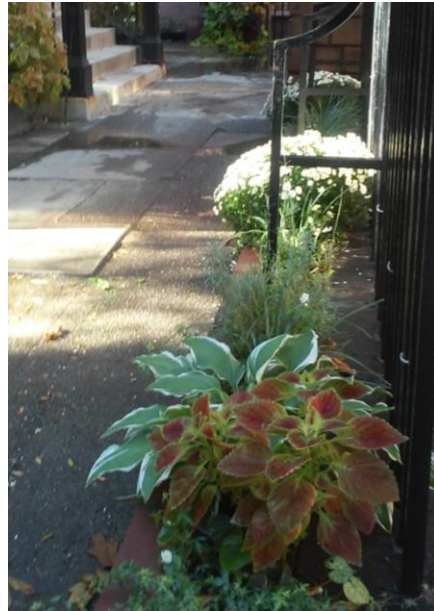
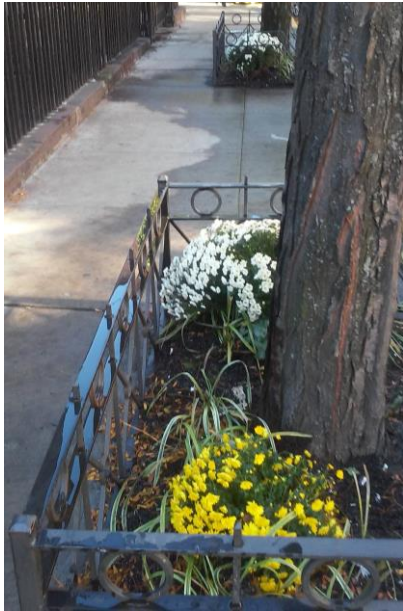
News of Members and Friends

Raymond Gombach, Sacred Storyteller and a favorite speaker, died November 18

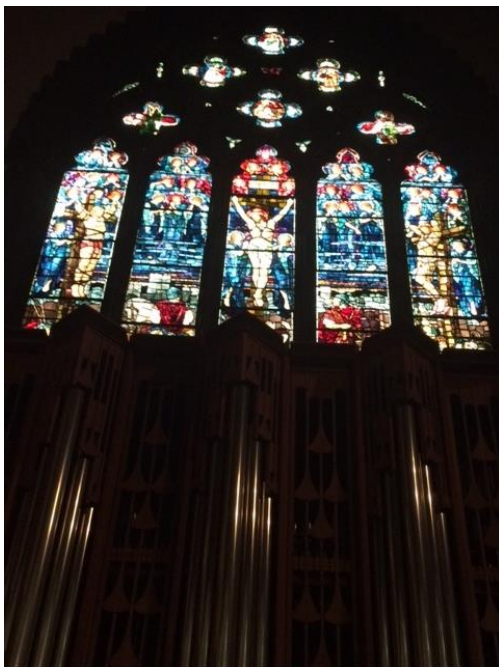
Jean Barlow notified us of a letter from his daughter reporting on **Ray Gombach's** death. Jean and her partner **Karen Benedetto** met him at CCC and got to know him well. "I miss him already, with his generosity, his humanity and his amazing lessons of life and love," said Jean. "He will be missed" said **Virginia Pfeiffer** on passing on the news. **Hilda Regier** gave us his bio: **Raymond Gombach** (Presbyterian), a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers, has been telling sacred stories for more than 35 years at such venues as the National Storytelling Association, American Bible Society, National Bible Association, Patchwork Center, New Age Center and churches of various denominations. He has taught master classes on telling and learning sacred stories at Yale Divinity School, Duke University, Drew University, Montclair State University and Albright College.

Recent planting by CCC people around St. Peter's Chelsea

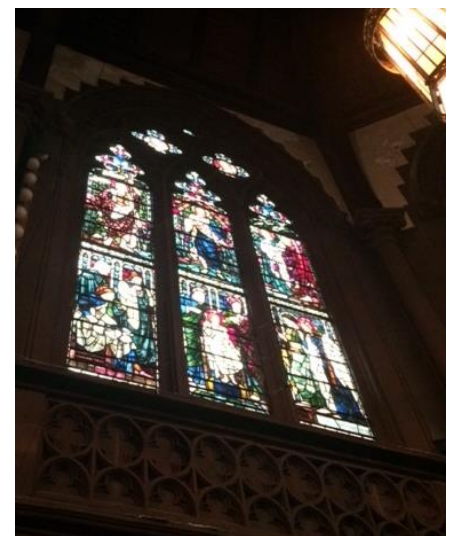
Michael Victor Ruggiero (of MVR/H Line Arborist) has been busy enlivening our surroundings again. "Mums were planted on Halloween. **Gloria Schofner** and I planted bulbs last Sunday (Nov. 4). The grasses in tree beds were donated by **Madeleine Gill** from her garden and we planted them together in early October."
– MVR



Another church's stained glass windows



On October 16, **Hilda Regier** and I attended a lecture at The Church of the Holy Trinity on East 88th Street. The topic was English artist Henry Holiday and the stained glass windows he designed for the church in 1881. The windows are breathtaking. My photos do not do justice to the jewel tone colors in the glass. The church is gorgeous and well worth a visit. – *Gloria Schofner*



Veterans Day Parade

Gloria Schofner went to the 2016 Veterans Day Parade looking for our own WWII veteran **Rick Carrier**, but he didn't make it this year. Still, Gloria got some great shots, despite that it was cold and windy that day, so I'm sharing them! At left, a WWI "doughboy" casts a shadow; at right a re-creation of a very famous WWII "homecoming" photo, a sailor kisses a nurse, meaning to thank ALL nurses!



Diane Mason's "yearning for community" poem.

conjure...

.....something to conjure with
a burst of magic
to relieve this fullness of sensation
(that threatens to shatter a fragile cohesion)
this being at sea and drawn upon
by all the planets orbiting the sun,
this too raw contact with water air and fire
no ground beneath the feet, no earth, no home;
something to conjure with -
a stake in the earth,
a totem, a shrine,
a circle of fellows
to link arms with, shed tears
and dance.

Museum exhibit on – plastic trash!

I recently saw a fascinating exhibit at the Museum of Art & Design (at Columbus Circle) based on Plastic Trash. In 2006, Australian sisters Margaret



including video- and audiotape, tinsel, zip ties, shopping bags, etc. The work was inspired by the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a vast area located in the northern Pacific Ocean near Hawaii, where millions of tons of plastic trash accumulates in a giant ocean gyre.

and Christine Wertheim began to crochet household plastic into a "toxic reef". They continued to develop plastic coral sculptures using domestic trash

Other such gyres dot the globe, and these ghastly legacies of human consumption are having detrimental effects on biological, ecological, and economic systems. The museum pieces look beautiful until you look up close and realize what they are. Will we ever learn we need to protect the earth -- and not continue to destroy it? – *Gloria Schofner*

CCC Mission Statement

An independent, nondenominational, lay-led Christian congregation, Chelsea Community Church is not a building but a people. We offer a supportive environment for people of all faiths and uncertain faith: TO ENABLE each individual to define personal religious beliefs, TO WORSHIP in prayer, music, reading and interpretation of Scripture with speakers from a variety of backgrounds, TO NURTURE each other in spiritual growth, while respecting and accepting a diversity of beliefs, TO SHARE with and support each other in the daily and extraordinary events of our lives, TO HELP those in need both inside and outside our congregation. We welcome anyone to worship with us and become part of our extended Christian family. www.chelseachurch.org

CCC Trustees Plus

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Hilda Regier, Vice-Chair (Worship)
Paul Bodden, Treasurer
Lorraine Brown (Community Liaison)
Jennifer Lynch (CCS Reception)

Virginia Pfeiffer (Roster Coordinator)
Lynn Ramsey (Publicity/PR, Community Liaison)
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Corena Wong, Assistant Treasurer

Joanne Downes, Co-clerk, Special Music Scheduling Mary Sheeran, Co-clerk
Rev. Beth Perry, Pastoral Counselor Jeff Cubeta, Music Director Kathryn Buck, Website
Kathleen Reid, Newsletter Robert Hickey, Graphics

SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS and SPECIAL MUSIC
Worship Service, Sundays 12:00 p.m.

December 4 Rev. Emily Brown (United Church of Christ) is the associate pastor of Broadway United Church of Christ. She previously served the congregation as a pastoral associate and then as acting associate pastor. Formerly a community minister at Judson Memorial Church, she earned her M.Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary in 2010. While at Union she received the David H.C. Read Memorial Preacher/Scholar Award, a national honor that enabled her to travel in Israel. She also received Union's Kneeland Award for Preaching. *Special Music: Nina Siegel*

December 11 Priscilla Lopez (Muslim) is a contract coach and mentor at Exodus Transitional Community. A Native American from Montana, she came to New York in 2001. She graduated from York College in Queens and completed nearly two years in a master's program in clinical social work at New York University before being incarcerated. She was released from prison in February 2016.

December 18 Thomas Southern (Presbyterian) is a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers. An ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church USA, he is a retired social worker. After working in the New York City Administration for Children's Services for several decades, he spent the last 10 years of his career as an adjunct professor at several graduate social work schools in the New York metropolitan area. He earned his MSW degree at Columbia University and an advanced certificate in social work at the Hunter College School of Social Work.

December 25 Rev. Elizabeth A. Perry (United Church of Christ) is Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor. She is a lead faculty member of the University of Phoenix and an online instructor with BeADisciple.com, where she trains churches in Safe Sanctuary, spiritual gifts, digital ministries, meditation and mysticism. A pastor for more than 20 years, she has served churches in Manhattan, Long Island and Pennsylvania. She earned an M.Div. degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. Ordained in the United Methodist Church, she currently has Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ.

January 1 Lay-Led Service

January 8 Rev. Dr. William Weisenbach (Presbyterian), a member of the Board of Trustees of New York Theological Seminary, retired as senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Katonah in Westchester County. Previously pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Philipstown in Cold Spring, NY, he earlier was vice president for academic affairs and professor of church management at New York Theological Seminary. He earned his D.Min. degree at the seminary and was awarded an honorary D.D. after his 24 years of service to the institution.

January 15 Martina Bruno (Interfaith) is working toward a master of arts degree in pastoral care at New York Theological Seminary. A mezzo soprano, she has been a soloist at Chelsea Community Church numerous times and has sung at venues that range from subway platforms to Carnegie Hall as well as on European tours. A graduate of SUNY Purchase, she has studied at the Conservatorio Di Mantova in Italy. She is currently a young artist in residence at Opera Ebony. *Special Music: Michael James Leslie*

January 22 Fr. Thomas Franks (Roman Catholic) is pastor of The Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Cross and St. John the Baptist. He was ordained to the priesthood at Sacred Heart Church in Yonkers in 2008. He is an elected member of the Provincial Council of the Capuchin Franciscan Friars and the

deputy chief chaplain for the Metropolitan Transit Authority. A graduate of Fordham University, he earned his M.Div. degree at Weston Jesuit Seminary in Cambridge, MA. He is now working toward a licenciate degree at Boston College.

January 29 Joe Tolbert (American Baptist) is a second-year student at Union Theological Seminary. A graduate of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, he developed an arts consultancy to work with nonprofit organizations. He was also the co-director of the music ministry at the Foster Chapel Baptist Church in Knoxville. ***Special Music: Pamela Palmieri***

February 5 Rev. Elizabeth A. Perry (United Church of Christ) is Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor. She is a lead faculty member of the University of Phoenix and an online instructor with BeADisciple.com, where she trains churches in Safe Sanctuary, spiritual gifts, digital ministries, meditation and mysticism. A pastor for more than 20 years, she has served churches in Manhattan, Long Island and Pennsylvania. She earned an M.Div. degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. Ordained in the United Methodist Church, she currently has Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ.

February 12 Rev. Stephen H. Phelps (Presbyterian) is honorably retired from ministry in his denomination. From 2011-14, he was the interim senior minister at The Riverside Church in Manhattan. He previously served in a similar capacity at first Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. Before coming to New York City, he was a Presbyterian minister in Buffalo. He received his M.Div. degree from Yale Divinity School and is currently writing a book on Job. ***Special Music: Deborah Karpel***

February 19 Lay-Led Service

February 26 Ernest Henry (Unaffiliated) became a state-certified paralegal during his 24 years of incarceration in New York prisons and was for 10 years the chairman of the Alternatives to Violence Project in Sing Sing Correctional Facility. He earned a B.S. degree in organizational management from Nyack College in 2001 via the Hudson Link program and received a master's degree in professional studies from the New York Theological Seminary program in Sing Sing in 2003. He is a board member of Rising Hope, Inc., and executive director of the Hudson Valley ReEntry Network. He hosts a radio talk show, Voices beyond the Wall on WVKR FM. He and his wife operate two companies, Friends beyond the Wall, Inc. and Jaden Moore of New York, Inc. ***Special Music: William Saffkow***

*NOTE: We gratefully acknowledge that "Special Music" listed above with the speaker schedule is made possible through funding by the **John Eggleston Legacy Fund** and scheduled by **Joanne Downes**.*

Our ongoing weekly book reading group, led by Pastoral Counselor Rev. Beth Perry, meeting at 10:30 a.m. on most Sunday mornings in St. Peter's rectory, is discussing Bishop Shelby Spong's book *Biblical Literalism: A Gentile Heresy* (see page 2). For more information: revbethperry@gmail.com

info@chelseachurch.org (212) 886-5463 www.chelseachurch.org

The Newsletter is published quarterly in December, March, June and September. Special thanks are due, with each issue, to those who help put it together and get it to you – to all of you who submit news and material, and later stuff, stamp and seal; to **Lynne Robinson** for the mailing list, to **Lynn Ramsey** for editorial assistance and proofreading. **Please submit material for the spring newsletter** (March – May) to Kathy Reid by **January 31: wkreid@aol.com** or call (212) 685-0190.
